CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of providing medical triage information over a communications network, the method comprising:

a person seeking medical advice;

a medical practitioner;

a telecommunications network;

a data network;

a computer system comprising

a display device providing the means for a user to view prompts and information necessary to practice the current invention;

an input device providing the means for the said user to interact with the software component of the invention

a processing unit for manipulation of data and for execution of software;

a storage device for storage of the software and the files associated with the invention;

a device for interfacing with said data network;

said data network interconnecting a plurality of said computer systems

an algorithm for determining an appropriate medical response for a given symptom and a plurality of high-risk factors;

said person communicating via said telecommunications network with said medical practitioner;

said medical practitioner following said algorithm so that an appropriate response for said person's

symptom is determined;

a means for providing medical advice to said person;

whereby said person receives medical advice from said medical practitioner via a telecommunications network and the determination of said medical advice is facilitated by execution of said algorithm.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein said telecommunications network comprising a plurality of devices including but not limited to a telephone, and a public switched telephone network.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein said telecommunications network further including a PBX telephone system.

4. The method of Claim 1 wherein said telecommunications network further including a Voice over IP network.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein said data network comprises the Internet.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said data network comprises an intranet.

7. The method of Claim 1 further including:

software automating a portion of said algorithm;

software asking a user to log call information including but not limited to a patient's name, a caller's name, a phone number, a doctor's name, and a chief complaint;

software assessing a patient's level of risk;

a means for saving said call information, the patient's level of risk, and determined medical response to a storage device.

8. The method of Claim 7 further comprising a transfer of information via said data network whereby storage of said information may occur across a plurality of remote computers in addition to the local computer.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein said means for providing medical advice to said person further includes said medical practitioner communicating to said person determined medical advice.

10. The method of Claim 1 wherein said computer system further includes:

a first device for interfacing with a telecommunications system;

a first means for performing automatic speech recognition on an audio signal from first device;

a second means for synthesizing computer text into speech;

a user communicating with said computer system using spoken language by means of said first device and said first means;

said computer system communicating with and responding to said user using a natural language by use of said second means;

a plurality of audio files accessible by said computer system from a location selected from the group consisting of a local storage device, and a remote storage device located on a remote computer system accessible via said data network;

a third means for playback of said plurality of audio files via said first device;

a fourth means for prompting a user, asking said user a series of questions, selecting an appropriate audio file to playback based on said user's answers to said series of questions, and playing of the selected audio file via said telecommunications network using said third means thereby partially automating the means for providing medical advice to said person; whereby the audio file played to said user via said telecommunications network contains medical information specific to said user.

11. The method of Claim 10 wherein said natural language includes but is not limited to English, French, and German whereby said user may converse with said computer system in a plurality of languages allowing for the current invention to be accessible to a multitude of persons, allowing for increased access to medical information for non-English-speaking persons.

12 ~~11~~. The method of Claim 11 wherein said plurality of audio files to be played to said caller by said third means contains an audio message recorded by said caller's own doctor.

13 ~~12~~. The method of Claim 1 wherein said means for providing medical advice to said person further includes software as a means for transmitting medical advice over a data network.

14 ~~13~~. The method of Claim 12 wherein said software encodes transmitted data as HTML files.

15 ~~14~~. The method of Claim 12 wherein said software encodes transmitted data as VoiceXML files.

16
15. A method for enhancing a caller's experience of using an automated telephone service comprising:

a caller;

said caller's preferences including but not limited to voice of automated telephone service;

said caller's preferences stored in a computerized storage device;

a first means for identifying said caller;

a second means for loading said caller's preferences;

a third means for dynamically adapting said automated telephone service to said caller's preferences;

whereby such customization of automated telephone service increases said user's satisfaction of said automated telephone service.

17
16. A machine for providing medical advice over a telecommunications network comprising:

a display device providing the means for a human operator to view prompts and information necessary to practice the current invention;

an input device providing the means for the said operator to interact with the software component of the invention;

a processing unit for manipulation of data and for execution of software;

a memory which is used by said processing unit during said manipulation of data and execution of software;

a storage device for storage of the software and the files associated with the invention;

a first device for interfacing with said data network;

a second device for interfacing with a telecommunications system;

a first means for performing automatic speech recognition on an audio signal from second device;

a second means for synthesizing computer text into speech;

a human caller who is seeking medical advice, be they a patient or a caller acting as a proxy for said patient;

a third means which said caller can use to communicate with said computer system using spoken language using said second device and said first means;

said spoken language including but not limited to English, French, and German;

a plurality of audio files with prerecorded medical advice recorded by physicians;

a fourth means which allows for the playback of said audio files via said second device;

a fifth means for said caller to answer a series of questions, including but not limited to said patient's name, said caller's name, a phone number, a doctor's name, chief complaint, and a series of questions to determine if a high-risk medical condition exists, resulting in the selection of a subset of said audio files accessible by said computer system from a location selected from the group consisting of a local storage device, and a storage device located on a remote computer system accessible via said data network, to be played over said telecommunications network using said second device;

a sixth means which allows for said caller and said computer system interaction to be documented and saved in a storage device;

whereby the audio file played to said user via said telecommunications network contains medical information specific to said user's condition;

whereby said medical information is in said patient's doctor's own voice; and

whereby said patient will be more confident in said automated telephone service since a playback message was custom-tailored for said patient.

18~~17~~. The machine of Claim 16 wherein said data network is comprised of a network of type selected

from the group consisting of the Internet, an intranet, and an extranet.

If the examiner does not feel that the present claims are technically adequate, applicant respectfully requests that the examiner write acceptable claims pursuant to MPEP 707.07(j).